

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SS-15 SSO-00 NSCE-00 SP-02
CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 INRE-00 L-03 EB-08 /063 W
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O 291627Z APR 78
FM AMCONSUL LENINGRAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 4250
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW NIACT IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY SEOUL IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
AMEMBASSY HELSINKI
AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 LENINGRAD 01319

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: EAIR, CGEN, UR, US, KS
SUBJECT: DEBRIEFING OR KOREAN PILOT AND NAVIGATOR

REF: LENINGRAD 1310, LENINGRAD 1318

1. SUMMARY: FOLLOWING THEIR TRANSFER TO CUSTODY OF CONSUL
GENERAL AT ONE P.M., APRIL 29, KOREAN AIRLINE (KAL) CAP-
TAIN KIM CHANG-KYU AND NAVIGATOR YI JUN-SIK DESCRIBED IN
DETAIL TO CONGEN OFFICERS BOTH PLANE INCIDENT AND THEIR
SUBSEQUENT INTERROGATION. FOLLOWING ARE HIGHLIGHTS: (A)
BOEING 707 WAS FIRST TO BE REINTRODUCED ON POLAR ROUTE
SINCE 1976 TO MEET INCREASE IN AUTHORIZED FLIGHTS BUT UN-
LIKE USUAL DC-10S LACKED INERTIAL NAVIGATION EQUIPMENT;
(B) NAVIGATOR HAD NOT FLOWN ROUTE IN 707 SINCE 1976 AND
WAS UNAWARE THAT LORAN STATIONS NO LONGER EXISTED, (C)
NAVIGATOR ASSUMES GYROSCOPE MALFUNCTIONED BUT HIS REQUEST
TO EXAMINE EQUIPMENT WAS DENIED WHEN SOVIETS TOLD HIM
EQUIPMENT WAS WORKING PROPERLY; (D) CONTRARY SOVIET CLAIM
THAT SEVERAL INTERCEPTORS SIGNALLED HIM TO LAND, HE SAW ONLY
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ONE PLANE WHICH SIMPLY FLEW ON PARALLEL COURSE WITHOUT
MAKING ANY SPECIAL SIGNALS; HE TRIED BUT WAS UNABLE COM-
MUNICATE WITH INTERCEPTOR VIA VHF EMERGENCY TRANSMITTER
SINCE MILITARY AIRCRAFT OPERATE ONLY ON UHF. SINCE PILOT
COULD NOT SEE BEHIND FRONT EDGE OF WING AND STEWARDS WERE
BUSY SERVING MEAL, IT IS NOT EXCLUDED THERE WERE OTHER
INTERCEPTORS, BUT NONE SAW THEM IF THEY WERE PRESENT; (E)

KOREANS WERE PHYSICALLY WELL TREATED BUT KEPT APART, INTERROGATED SEPARATELY FOR FIVE OF SEVEN DAYS FOR TOTAL OF AT LEAST 30 HOURS; (F) DURING INTERROGATION, SOVIETS MADE SOME EFFORT TO PUT WORDS IN KOREAN MOUTHS AND WARNED THAT THEY WERE SUBJECT TO BETWEEN ONE AND FOUR YEARS IMPRISONMENT FOR VIOLATING SOVIET BORDERS; (G) INTERROGATORS DID NOT PROBE FOR INFORMATION ABOUT POSSIBLE U.S. LINK OR KOREAN DEFENSE DETAILS, STRAYING FROM INCIDENT ONLY TO EXTENT OF ASKING FOR INFORMATION ABOUT FAMILIES IN KOREA; (H) "SUGGESTION THEY APPEAL TO BREZHNEV FOR LENIENCY" WAS SPRUNG ON KOREANS ONLY LAST DAY; THEY WERE ASKED TO WRITE UP "AKT" IN OWN HANDWRITING SUMMARIZING INCIDENT; SOVIETS SAW TO IT THAT WORDS LIKE "UNINTENTIONAL" WERE NOT INCLUDED IN TEXT, THOUGH KOREANS SAID THEY ALWAYS USED THIS WORD WHEN BEING INTERROGATED ABOUT INTRUSION; THEY WERE ASKED TO READ TEXT ALOUD INTO TAPE RECORDER AFTER WRITING IT UP, PRESUMABLY FOR FUTURE PROPAGANDA USE; (I) KOREANS DID NOT CLAIM TO HAVE RESISTED SIGNING AKT, EXPLAINING THEIR ACTION ON GROUNDS SOVIETS SAID THEY WERE GUILTY UNDER SOVIET LAW, EVEN IF THEIR INTRUSION WAS UNINTENTIONAL. (J) KOREANS WERE FLOWN TO LENINGRAD IN MILITARY AIRCRAFT FROM MILITARY AIRBASE NEAR KEM. END SUMMARY.

1. REPORT OF INCIDENT: FOLLOWING IS KAL NAVIGATOR AND PILOT VERSION OF CIRCUMSTANCES OF INCIDENT OVER SOVIET TERRITORY:

--DOWNED FLIGHT WAS FIRST BY KAL BOEING 707

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OVER POLAR ROUTE IN RECENT YEARS. KAL FLEW BOEING 707'S ON POLAR ROUTE FROM 1973 TO 1976 BUT FOR LAST YEAR AND TWO MONTHS HAS BEEN USING DC-10. IN CONTRAST TO DC-10'S WHICH HAD THREE INERTIAL GUIDANCE SYSTEMS (INS), BOEING 707 DID NOT HAVE INS EVEN THOUGH FLYING POLAR ROUTE. NAVIGATOR THEREFORE REQUIRED USE GYRO-COMPASS, LORAN, RADAR AND DOPPLER SYSTEMS. NAVIGATOR HAD FLOWN POLAR ROUTE OVER 120 TIMES, BUT CAPTAIN WAS ON FIRST POLAR FLIGHT AS CAPTAIN. --NAVIGATION ERROR WAS DUE TO MALFUNCTION OF GYRO-COMPASS SYSTEM. NAVIGATOR IS CERTAIN THAT HE WAS CORRECTLY ON ROUTE PAST GREENLAND. HOWEVER, AT SOME POINT THEREAFTER DUE GYRO-COMPASS FAILURE, COMPASS BEGAN FUNCTION LIKE MAGNETIC COMPASS. COMPASS READING INDICATED APPARENTLY CORRECT HEADING BUT COMPASS ACTUALLY BEGAN SHOW TURN. COURSE CHANGE WAS OF SUCH SLOWNESS AS TO BE UNDETECTED BY KAL CREW --WHEN QUESTION AIRCRAFT'S EXACT LOCATION CAME IN DOUBT, NAVIGATOR TRIED CHECK HEADING BY CONTACTING LORAN STATION SWITCH HE REMEMBERED FROM PAST EXPERIENCE, BUT THESE STATIONS WERE NO LONGER OPERATING. SINCE IT WAS STILL DAYLIGHT, HE

COULD NOT TAKE STAR FIX. EFFORT ESTABLISH FIX BY
DEAD RECKONING WAS HINDERED BY SNOW COVERED
LANDSCAPE AND PARTIAL CLOUD COVER.
--DESPITE FAILURE SECURE ASSURED FIX, PILOT SAID
HE THOUGHT HE STILL ON COURSE EVEN THOUGH HE HAD
CROSSED OBVIOUS SHORELINE. HE WAS TRYING IDENTIFY
LIGHTS OF CITY OBSERVED BELOW TO CHECK COURSE WHEN
COPILOT SUDDENLY NOTICED FIGHTER FLYING AT SAME

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ALTITUDE, SPEED AND DIRECTION AS KAL AIRLINER.
PILOT ASKED COPILOT TO CHECK MARKINGS AND AFTER
NOTING LARGE RED STAR ON TAIL CONCLUDED THAT KAL
AIRLINER HAD ENTERED SOVIET TERRITORY.
--ON SIGHTING SOVIET, PILOT TRIED TO CONTACT IT
ON INTERNATIONAL EMERGENCY FREQUENTLY BUT THERE
WAS NO ANSWER. PILOT ATTRIBUTES THIS POSSIBLY
TO FACT THAT KAL AIRLINE COMMUNICATION SYSTEM
WAS VHF WHILE MOST MILITARY AIRCRAFT USE UHF AND
SYSTEMS "MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE." PILOT SAYS FIGHTER
STAYED WITH AIRCRAFT ONLY ABOUT MINUTE OR TWO BY HIS
ESTIMATE ALTHOUGH SOVIETS LATER SAID IT WAS TWENTY
MINUTES. PILOT DOES NOT DISCOUNT FACT THAT FIGHTER
COULD HAVE BEEN THERE LONGER AND GONE UNDETECTED BY
CREW DUE TO LIMITED SIDE VISABILITY FROM CABIN AND FACT
THAT REMAINDER OF CREW WERE THEN BUSY WITH LUNCHEON
ARRANGEMENTS.

--SOVIET FIGHTER THEN DISAPPEARED SHORTLY AFTER BEING SIGHTED BY CREW. PILOT SAYS HE SAW NO SIGNAL BY SOVIET AIRCRAFT. HE DECIDED HOWEVER DESCEND AS SIGN OF
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UNDERSTANDING AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT THAT HE WAS OVER SOVIET TERRITORY.

--ALMOST SIMULTANEOUSLY WITH BEGINNING OF AIRLINER'S DESCENT, THERE WAS LARGE BANG AND CABIN DECOMPRESSION. PILOT THEN IMMEDIATELY DROPPED AIRCRAFT FROM 35,000 FEET TO AROUND 4,000, DESCENDING AT 5,500 FEET PER MINUTE.

--AFTER DESCENT, PILOT BEGAN SEARCH FOR LANDING PLACE. THIS WAS COMPLICATED BY DAMAGE WHICH AIRCRAFT HAD SUSTAINED. RUDDER WAS MALFUNCTIONING; AIRCRAFT WAS VEERING TO LEFT; AND PILOT HAD TROUBLE TRIMMING CRAFT.

--PILOT SAYS HE SIGHTED NO SOVIET AIRCRAFT TRYING TO DIRECT HIM TO LANDING SPACE. IN SEARCH ON HIS OWN, HE CONSTANTLY FLEW TO LIGHTED UP AREAS HOPING TO FIND LANDING FIELD. AFTER FLYING AROUND FOR HOUR AND HALF TO REDUCE FUEL LOAD, HE BEGAN OVERFLY POSSIBLE LANDING SIGHTS CHECKING EACH OUT FOR SUITABLE NEARBY VILLAGE GIVEN NEED FOR PROMPT AID TO PASSENGERS. --ULTIMATE CHOICE WAS LAKE NEAR SMALL VILLAGE NEAR KEM. SOFTEST POSSIBLE LANDING WAS MADE TO AVOID BREAKING THROUGH ICE AND AIRCRAFT DELIBERATELY WAS BROUGHT TO HALT WITH LEFT LANDING GEAR ON LAND TO MINIMIZE DANGER SHOULD HOT ENGINES MELT THROUGH ICE.

--AFTER LANDING, PILOT HAD TIME TO ASK FLIGHT ATTENDANTS IF THEY HAD SEEN SOVIET INTERCEPTORS BUT THEY HAD NOT.

--PILOT AND NAVIGATOR WERE THEN SEPARATED FROM GROUP AFTER SOVIET BORDER GUARDS ARRIVED.

2. INTERROGATION. KOREANS WERE HELD IN SEPARATE ROOMS UNDER GUARD IN WHAT SOVIETS TOLD THEM WAS TOURIST HOTEL IN KEM. NAVIGATOR WAS INTERROGATED IN KOREAN BY OFFICIAL FROM MOSCOW; PILOT IN ENGLISH BY MAN DESCRIBING HIMSELF AS LOCAL TEACHER. KITCHEN STAFF WAS VERY SOLICITOUS
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THEY EAT WELL.

3. THEY WERE INTERROGATED FIVE OF SEVEN DAYS: 13 HOURS FIRST DAY, 9 HOURS SECOND, 8 HOURS LAST DAY AND BETWEEN 5 AND 8 HOURS ON OTHER TWO DAYS. IN FAMILIAR FASHION, THEY WERE MADE TO REPEAT AND REPEAT THEIR VERSION OF INCIDENT, WITH INTERROGATORS CROSS-CHECKING FACTS FROM

DOSSIER. SOVIETS PROBED WHO IN PARIS HAD GIVEN THEM INSTRUCTIONS FOR FLIGHT, AND ALL DETAILS OF HOW FLIGHT BEGAN AND DEVELOPED. BUT THEY DID NOT FOLLOW FAMILIAR PATTERN OF PRESSING FOR IRRELEVANT INFORMATION, E.G., ON POSSIBLE LINKS WITH U.S. OR ON KOREAN DEFENSE PLANS. ONLY OUT-OF-LINE QUESTIONING CONCERNED DETAILS ABOUT THEIR FAMILIES IN SEOUL. PILOT WAS CONGRATULATED FOR HIS SKILLFUL LANDING.

4. THEY WERE NOT MISHANDLED OR THREATENED, PHYSICALLY. RATHER PSYCHOLOGICAL PRESSURE WAS EVIDENTLY BROUGHT TO BEAR OF ISOLATION, LONG INTERROGATION, AND OCCASIONAL SHARP CONFRONTATION WHEN THEY DID NOT DESCRIBE THEIR ACTIONS TO SOVIET SATISFACTION. MOST IMPORTANT, THEY WERE WARNED THAT, UNDER SOVIET LAW, THEY WERE GUILTY OF VIOLATING SOVIET AIR SPACE, EVEN IF THEIR ACT WAS UNINTENTIONAL, AND THEY RISKED ONE TO FOUR YEARS IN PRISON.

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5. ON APRIL 28 THEY WERE "ENCOURAGED" TO APPEAL FOR CLEMENCY AND FORGIVENESS TO CHAIRMAN OF PRESIDUM OF SUPREME SOVIET (I.E. BREZHNEV), AND TOLD IF THEY DID SO THEY WOULD BE RELEASED. EFFORTS TO INCLUDE ANY REFERENCE TO "UNINTENTIONAL" INTRUSION IN THE STATEMENT THEY WERE TOLD TO DRAW UP WAS IGNORED, WITH THE SOVIET

ARGUING THIS WAS IRRELEVANT. THE PILOT WAS ASKED TO WRITE UP THE AKT IN KOREAN (IT SOUNDED VERY MUCH AS THOUGH HE WROTE WHAT WAS DICTATED TO HIM), AND THEN BOTH MEN WERE ASKED TO READ THE DOCUMENT ALOUD INTO A TAPE RECORDER -- FOR OBVIOUS FUTURE PROPAGANDA USE. THEY WERE THEN TOLD THEY WOULD BE RELEASED THE NEXT DAY.

6. ON APRIL 29, THE SOVIETS DROVE THE KOREANS FIFTEEN MINUTES FROM KEM TO A MILITARY AIRBASE WHERE THEY WERE FLOWN IN TWIN TURBO PROP EXECUTIVE-CONTOURED MILITARY AIRCRAFT TO LENINGRAD, WHERE THEY ARRIVED AROUND NOON. THEY SAW A NUMBER OF FIGHTER AIRCRAFT AND HELICOPTORS ON THE AIRBASE, AND COVERED SHELTERS FOR INDIVIDUAL AIRCRAFT. KEM ITSELF APPEARED TO BE A GARRISON TOWN WITH ABOUT
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HALF THE MILITARY IN WHAT KOREANS WERE TOLD WERE BORDER GUARD UNIFORMS.

7. BOTH KOREANS APPEARED TIRED BUT NONE THE WORSE FOR WEAR FROM THEIR EXPERIENCE. THEY ARRIVED IN UNIFORM CARRYING THEIR BAGGAGE. BOTH EXPRESSED GREAT RELIEF, IN FAIR ENGLISH, AT BEING IN AN AMERICAN HOME, AS THEY ATE A HEARTY LUNCHEON. BUCHANAN

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